Urban Development and Commerce Sectoral Task Force

Draft Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface i

A Note to Reader ii

1. Introduction 1

    1.1 Report Structure 1

    1.2 Task Force Process 1

2. Sustainability in the Urban Context 2

    2.1 Defining Sustainable Urban Development 2

    2.2 Urban Development Patterns in Ontario 3

3. Vision of a Sustainable Community 4

4. Constraints and Opportunities 6

    4.1 Constraints 6

    4.2 Opportunities 8

5. Working Towards Sustainability:
    Practices and Policies in Place 10

6. Directions for the Future 14

7. Recommendations 20

PREFACE

This report is one in a series prepared for the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy. The Round Table was established in 1988 by the Government of Ontario to create a sustainable development strategy for the province. The Honourable Ruth Grier, Minister of the Environment, is its Chair.

To assist in the creation of a sustainable development strategy, the Round Table established six task forces responsible for the Agriculture and Food, Energy and Minerals, Forestry, Manufacturing, Transportation, and Urban Development and Commerce sectors. It also set up a Native People's Circle to provide the Aboriginal perspective on sustainable development.

The sectoral task forces were charged with reporting to the Round Table on how best to begin to achieve sustainability in each sector within the context of the six principles set out by the Round Table in its **Challenge Paper**. These are:

- anticipation and prevention of environmental problems;
- the use of full cost accounting;
- informed decision-making which reflects environmental impacts and long term goals;
- living of the interest and reserving our "natural capital";
- quality over quantity; and
- respect for nature and the rights of future generations.

The Round Table also asked the task forces to consult with stakeholders in developing their overall strategy for sustainable development. Through a combination of research and formal and informal meetings with stakeholders, the task forces and the Native Circle have documented the state of each sector and the options and obstacles to sustainability, as well as their recommendations for action.

The sectoral task force reports will be forwarded to the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy. The final recommendations will be considered by the Round Table as it prepares a Provincial strategy for sustainable development.

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A Note to Reader:

The Urban Development and Commerce Task Force was established to examine the options for implementing sustainable development within the urban development and commerce sector. The members of the Urban Development and Commerce Task Force are:

Chair:

Helen Cooper, Mayor, City of Kingston
Jim Bullock, C.E.O., Cadillac Fairview Corporation Limited
Monica Campbell, Supervisor of Environmental Health Assessment & Research, Environmental Protection Office, City of Toronto Department of Public Health
John Cox, President, John E. Cox & Associates
Bob Paehlke, Professor, Political Studies and Environmental Resource Studies, Trent University
Fred Plain, Elder, Chiefs of Ontario, Native Circle Representative
Sylvia Sutherland, Mayor, City of Peterborough, Round Table Member
Marcia Sypnowich, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Development, Ministry of Municipal Affairs
Marcia Valiante, Lawyer, Turkstra Garrod, Environmental Law

In this report, the nine members of the Urban Development and Commerce Task Force present their views on how to integrate economy and environment in the urban development and commerce sector.

The Urban Development Task Force is inviting the public to comment on this draft report and on its recommendations. The views of the public will be included in the final report presented to the Round Table and made public in November. This report will be considered by the Round Table in the preparation of its overall strategy for sustainable development for the Province of Ontario.

Please send written comments to :

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Report Structure

The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of how to implement sustainable development in the urban development and commerce sector. The introduction provides a background of the task force process and membership. Chapter Two begins with a discussion of the application of the concept of sustainable development to the urban setting. The chapter continues with a brief review of the urban patterns that exist in Ontario and the problems that have arisen as a result of unsustainable practices. From this review of the past and present the report shifts to the future with an outline of the task force vision of a sustainable community. The remainder of the report deals with the challenges of implementing sustainable development in Ontario. Chapter Four lists the constraints and opportunities that need to be addressed. It is quite evident that some municipalities have already taken the first steps towards sustainability. Chapter Five presents examples of some of the sustainable development initiatives in the urban development sector. Building on the experience of local communities and responding to the constraints and opportunities, the task force suggests further actions in chapter six. The final chapter offers specific recommendations for the Round Table to include in its sustainable development strategy for Ontario.

1.2 Task Force Process

The urban development and commerce task force, which began meeting in February 1991, is part of a larger Round Table consultation process which has included public feedback on the Challenge Paper, an Environmental Breakfast and meetings with local Round Tables.

The task force consultation program consisted of focused consultation with a selection of key stakeholders. The purpose of the consultation was to give stakeholders an initial opportunity to contribute their ideas about sustainable development to the task force. The second phase of the consultation begins with the circulation of this report to a much wider list of stakeholders.

Members of the task force visited nine municipalities across Ontario and met with a variety of local representatives, including staff, elected councillors and members of the public. The following municipalities participated in the consultation:

1. Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth
2. Town of Hawkesbury
3. Town of Midland
4. City of Oshawa
5. City of Ottawa
6. City of Sault Ste. Marie
7. Regional Municipality of Sudbury
8. Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto
9. Regional Municipality of Waterloo

2. SUSTAINABILITY IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

2.1 Defining Sustainable Urban Development

As a first step in discussing the current relationship between urban development, commerce and sustainable development, it is necessary to define these concepts. "Our Common Future" the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, has defined sustainable development in terms of meeting the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Inherent in this concept is that sustainable development must reconcile the need for economic development with conservation of the resources on which growth depends, and in a broader sense, with preservation (and enhancement) of the entire natural environment.

One of the primary aims of sustainable development is to close the raw material - production - product (either goods or services) - waste cycle. This can be accomplished by promoting more efficient patterns of urban development, reducing energy use, production of emissions and other wastes and the use of raw material, and recycling and reusing wastes wherever possible.

Another aim of sustainable development is to ensure that the economic base, and the infrastructure required to support that base, is sustainable in the long run. In densely urbanized areas of Southern Ontario where the economy has been buoyant until recently, the challenge is to mitigate the negative impacts of the pattern of economic growth that has occurred such as congestion, pollution, or consumption of agricultural lands for urban uses; and to devise alternatives which ensure that future development does not repeat the same mistakes.

In other parts of Ontario, such as single-industry towns, and communities based on resource extraction industries, sustainable development has to address the issue of economic survival. Many of these communities are characterized by lack of diversity in their economic base, or by boom-bust cycles. What actions are needed to improve the economic sustainability of these communities; how much it will cost, both financially and environmentally; whether or not the benefits outweigh the costs; and possible alternatives to traditional approaches, are issues which must be addressed when reviewing the long term sustainability of these communities, and determining future strategies.

The principle of social equity must also be incorporated into any strategies to implement sustainable development. Unless these strategies also help to create a more equitable and livable human environment, the public will be reluctant to lend its support. If sustainable development is to be politically acceptable, it must have the understanding and support and involvement of people who are affected; and implementation processes must be open and fair.

Developing a more sustainable society will also require substantial changes in public attitudes and expectations. Our society currently relies on continued economic growth to satisfy the public's expectations of rising affluence and living standards. If a society based on sustainable

development, rather than exponential growth, is to be successful over the long term, it must be accompanied by a significant shift in attitudes and values to those that emphasize quality of life rather than the accumulation of material wealth.

2.2 Urban Development Patterns in Ontario

Ontario has over 50% of the country's population living in the highly urbanized southern portion of the province. This region contains ten of the country's largest cities. Consequently, the impact of urban centres on the ability to achieve sustainability in the province cannot be underestimated. Progress towards sustainability in the urban development and commerce sector will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to the health and well being of the province and nation as a whole.

The relationship between urban development patterns and sustainability is more than simple cause and effect. The task force recognizes that many of the current forms of development are not sustainable and in fact contribute to the perpetuation of unsustainable practices by separating housing, shopping and work into different districts. For example, low density, single family detached housing developments perpetuate a pattern of high energy use for heating, high infrastructure development and costs, and automobile dependence (which also increases energy use and emissions into the air). At the same time there are certain forces which support the continuation of certain types of development (public attitudes, institutional barriers and legislation and financial, i.e taxes etc.).

Any strategy for sustainable development must consider sustainability in both the local and regional context. On a regional scale Ontario has a variety of types of communities ranging from large metropolitan centres to single-industry frontier towns to small rural service centres. Sustainability on a regional scale must focus on regional economic development and the impact of regional development patterns on resource use, the consumption of agricultural land for urban uses and the protection of wilderness areas and significant natural features. On the local level sustainability relates largely to the pattern of the built environment (housing, offices etc.) and human activity within urban centres. The impacts of unsustainable activity in urban centres is not usually the result of a direct, large scale assault on the environment (such as clear cutting large areas of forest), but rather is the cumulative effect of people going about their everyday lives, travelling to work and shopping, building and heating homes and offices: what many view to be the necessities of daily urban life.

Present urban forms and urban development patterns in Ontario have created a number of problems which can be grouped into three categories or symptoms of urban distress: ecological, economic and social.

The ecological symptoms include the pollution of air, water and soil, the loss of farmland, and the destruction of the natural environment and wildlife habitat, high waste production and noise. The economic symptoms include the erosion of the economic base of many Ontario towns,

particularly those bordering on the United States and those primarily dependent on a single industry or a non-renewable resource. The social symptoms include such trends such as increasing numbers of unemployed and homeless peoples and the growing demand for affordable housing.

Given the problems faced by Ontario communities it is clear that a reversal in current trends of urban development is needed. The challenge that lies ahead is to determine what sustainable urban development is and how to achieve that goal. The next section outlines the task force's view of a sustainable future.

3. VISION OF A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

The task force has been asked to provide advice on directions for the future of Ontario. To do so, one must have a vision of where we should be headed. Sustainable development cannot be viewed as an end state. It can be described best as a philosophy or approach. It is clear that our current situation demands new ways of dealing with problems.

The task force has defined the goals of a sustainable community:

- to maintain biodiversity
- to ensure a healthy ecosystem
- to enhance and protect the natural ecological processes within the ecosystem
- to minimize the consumption of non-renewable resources
- to use renewable resources on a sustained yield basis
- to support a healthy and stable economy
- to support equitable participation in decision-making
- to minimize waste creation and pollution

The task force has created the following scenario for a sustainable community of the future:

In practical terms, sustainable cities are more compact and patterned to a greater extent in mixed-use configurations. Transportation distances are diminished, the mix of transportation modes used within the city shifts ever-increasingly toward more energy efficient options. Buildings improve in terms of the energy necessary for heating, lighting and cooling. Urban open spaces are more often naturalized, they require less energy and fewer chemicals for

maintenance and indeed less maintenance altogether. These restored and naturalized green spaces also absorb more runoff, reducing the burden on improved water treatment facilities and seasonal demand for water. The urban economy as a whole is sharply less dependent on material resources extracted from nature and produces only a fraction of present day levels of waste materials.

Sustainable communities have a diverse and secure economic base which impacts minimally on biodiversity and ecological process within its borders. They emit an absolute minimum of pollutants into the water, air and soil and they minimize the consumption of resources at every opportunity. They reduce, re-use and recycle wastes and they minimize "greenfields" developments of all kinds. They recognize that land and habitat are the most important resource of all.

Achieving sustainable development in an urban context is a profound challenge. If our urban areas are to move toward sustainability they must rapidly become significantly more efficient in their per capita use of energy, materials,land and water. This cannot be done without some changes in habits and in some cases, loss of convenience. The first steps towards sustainable development are difficult because they are interpreted as ones which detract form our current desired standard of living. Using less is viewed as reducing the standard of living. As society's values shift to incorporate an understanding of the long term future and an appreciation of quality over quantity a new definition of quality of life will be derived. A community developing along the path to sustainability is one in which the security, satisfaction and well-being of the population are maintained or improved without any decline in natural wealth, the quality of the environment, or the abundance of our resource options.

The task which lies ahead then, is to find ways in which to make cities more compact without making them more congested. Personal mobility within cities should be based primarily on buses, street cars, subways, cycling and walking rather than the automobile. Wastes must be radically reduced. Goods and services have to be produced with less energy and less non renewable materials. All this must be achieved without significantly reducing economic productivity. The task is to develop urban forms which are more energy, land and materials efficient, but no less livable, equitable, creative and dynamic.

This seems to be a simple and direct prescription for a healthier future yet the task force is well aware of the complexities of the issues and the difficulty in effecting change. The challenge is not to determine what the future should be like but to determine how we should get there. Agreement can be reached on the desire for a clean environment and a healthy economy, however, the difficulty arises in trying to agree on the most appropriate path towards this goal. In contrast to earlier attempts at environmental protection, the sustainable development approach seeks to treat the causes not the symptoms. To do so we must consider the constraints and barriers to achieving sustainable development.

4. CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Constraints

Over the years society's perception and reaction to environmental problems has been tempered by the level of technical knowledge, the prevalent values of the time and political realities. Although values are beginning to shift more favourably towards the appreciation and protection of the environment and great strides have been made in the level of technical expertise, there are a number of constraints and barriers which have consistently blocked progress towards a more sustainable society. Options for sustainable development must address these constraints in order to be effective.

Jurisdictional Splits

Jurisdictional splits in responsibility for issues is a constant source of frustration when dealing with urban issues. The lack of clarity in the division of responsibility and the large numbers of agencies that have some portion of responsibility for an environmental issue make policy development and planning a complicated and arduous task. It appears that needless time is spent in inter-agency circulation and coordination, thus hindering the ability to examine the source of environmental problems. An example of jurisdictional split is the issue of water. At the present time there are six provincial ministries administering nearly forty different water-related initiatives.

Organizational Structure

Similarly, organizational structures may also stand in the way of effective problem resolution. The way in which organizations, government departments, in particular are currently structured has inhibited the ability to integrate the environment and economy. The ability of organizations, particularly government departments, to deal with environmental issues has been limited because environmental issues are dealt with separately from resource management and economic issues and environmental policy is generally regarded as an add-on to other policy fields. The result is a systemic barrier to the development of sustainable development policies. The organization of provincial ministries is an illustration of this problem with separate ministries for environment, natural resource management and urban development. This compartmentalization of environmental issues stands in the way of integrating environment and economy.

Information

An argument can be made for improved technical information to support decision-making. One of the major deficiencies in evaluating land use options is the lack of real information or predictions on cumulative impacts. More information will not necessarily guarantee

better decisions, however what is needed is better information and a means to integrate it into the decision making process without adding further costs and time to the decision-making process. Another factor regarding information is the fact that information regarding environmental impacts and costs are not always considering in the decision-making process. Environmental assessments for major public undertakings have been a requirement for a number of years however there is evidence that environmental considerations have not been taken into account in the pricing of resources such as energy and water. Ultimately informed decision-making will require the integration of environmental information into economic decision-making.

Lack of Suitable Methodologies

Related to the improvement of the environmental knowledge base is the need for methodologies for dealing with issues from a sustainable development perspective. In the municipal sector, some municipalities have produced state of the environment reports as a first step in approaching the integration of environment and economy. In the private sector, many firms have conducted environmental audits of their operations and have incorporated the results into their annual report. Although these initiatives are promising, they represent the minority. Further refinement of methodologies is also required.

Public Attitudes

The achievement of sustainable development goals will be dependent on the participation of all sectors of society. This will necessitate public acceptance of change in the urban environment. To date, the experience has not been promising. In fact, public resistance is often viewed as a major barrier to change in urban communities.

Legislation

The legislation which governs the urban development sector can be described as enabling legislation. As such it provides a description of the powers given to local governments for various purposes. From the perspective of local government the legislation is often criticized for its lack of clarity and the inadequacy of the powers delegated to local government. From the perspective of sustainable development the legislation does not provide the opportunity for integrating environmental and economic decision making nor does it support an ecosystem approach in making land use decisions. Specific examples of limitations of current legislation are the lack of legislative support for the preservation of trees, the lack of requirement in the Ontario Building Code for energy conservation measures in construction and the lack of more detailed guidance on environmental issues in the Planning Act.

Taxation

Although municipalities may support the concepts behind sustainable development, the municipal taxation system may impede implementation of these goals. In the face of declining provincial grants, municipalities must rely increasingly on property tax revenues to pay for maintenance of infrastructure, salaries and other non-capital expenditures. Due to the present structure of the municipal taxation system, these expenditures will have to be financed by future growth in population. More often than not, this new growth in population comes in the form of "greenfields" development which then perpetuates the low density, unsustainable pattern. Population growth in the form of intensification would promote more efficient use of existing services.

Although the above mentioned issues have all been characterized as constraints, on a more positive note they should be viewed as opportunities for change and ultimately opportunities for implementing sustainable development.

4.2 Opportunities

In addition to tackling the constraints and creating opportunities there are a number of other changes or trends in place that support more sustainable practices in the urban development sector.

Public Awareness of Environmental Issues

Recent polls have indicated that public awareness and concern about the environment has remained consistently high over the past several years. Far from being a fad or immediate reaction to what is perceived to be a crisis situation, the Canadian public has consistently ranked the environment as a high priority. This is a clear indication that the public is expecting, if not demanding improvements in environmental quality.

Greening of Corporate Sector

In the business sector, environmental consciousness is now becoming part of the desired corporate image. As well as being good corporate citizens, many companies have realized that being environmentally responsible is good for business. Businesses have learned new ways to cut costs while reducing energy use and waste. Moreover, as consumers influence change through their purchasing preferences, business is keenly aware of the competitive edge held by those companies that are perceived by the public as environmentally responsible.

Professional, Business and Municipal Organizations

Various organizations connected to the urban development and commerce sector are interested in sustainable development. Some have already taken steps to examine their organizations' policies and sponsor educational events for their members. These organizations hold tremendous potential for implementing sustainable development initiatives. They are valuable sources of information and can offer communications and networking systems that are already in place. The role of these organizations in the implementation of sustainable development should not be overlooked.

Citizen Participation and Environmental Interest Groups

The level of activity of local citizens groups and environmental groups in community projects is quite high. Earth Day activities across the province are a good example. People are volunteering their time to assist with projects such as tree planting, stream rehabilitation, recycling, composting and education projects. Often citizens and environmental groups act on their own but more recently governments and businesses have recognized the value in partnerships. This is one area that could be explored further. Many local initiatives could be implemented at a relatively low cost by tapping the resources of volunteers.

Multi-Partite Agreements

In some cases the best solution to a problem can be found by teaming up with a partner. In the municipal sector special arrangements to share services or facilities have often proved to be the most efficient solution to a problem. As environmental issues are rarely confined by municipal boundaries, multi-partite agreement may provide a means to overcome jurisdictional and boundary matters that complicate the resolution of environmental problems.

Pricing Policies

At the present time, pricing for certain municipal services and commodities (i.e. energy, water) does not encourage sustainable behaviour. Artificially low prices (that do not reflect full cost accounting) and volume discounts to large users do not inspire individuals and /or businesses to conserve resources. Adjustments in pricing policies will allow market forces to induce more sustainable patterns of resource use. Basically, higher prices will force people to conserve and also introduce a market for new technology. But tipping fees at land fills have in the short run only forced the hunt for disposal facilities.

Current Capacity for Change

Although earlier comments suggested that institutions and legislation can act as barriers to change, examples from across Ontario indicate that many changes can take place within our current legislative/institutional framework. Many municipalities have recognized the need to integrate the environment and the economy and many steps have been taken in this direction without necessarily calling it sustainable development.

5. WORKING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY: POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN PLACE

In spite of the constraints which were discussed in the previous chapter many sustainable practices are already in place or are being proposed. This gives the task force further cause for optimism and an opportunity to consider current initiatives in light of the goals the task force has identified. The following review of current actions is by no means comprehensive. It represents the information gathered in the task force's focused consultation program and brief review of the literature. While it does not include all initiatives it provides a overview of the kinds of approaches being tested.
The examples include practices that are common across Ontario and some that have been initiated by only a small number of communities. In some cases the results of these actions are as yet unknown.

1. Local Round Tables

The Round Table model for multi-stakeholder involvement in decision making has proved to be attractive and applicable to the local situation. A number of municipalities have established local round tables and others have shown an interest in pursuing this idea. The Round Table model responds to the need for new decision-making processes to achieve sustainable development. It is an open unregulated process which has potential for equitable participation and consensus building on community issues. It provides a unique opportunity to resolve problems or potential problems without the expense or formality of formal council or hearing procedures. Although the Round Table model can be used effectively to mediate disputes, its strength is the fact that it generally builds on opportunities and views participants as equal contributors to the process. A Round Table can provide informed input to the decision-making process, however, it should not be viewed as a replacement for existing decision-making processes.

2. Local Leadership

Local municipalities have the opportunity and responsibility of adopting a leadership stance. To paraphrase, they can and should "lead by example". Several municipalities have examined their own internal operations and programs and taken steps to "green" their organizations. This has included policies and programs such as purchasing policies,

energy efficiency measures in municipal buildings, fleet management, park maintenance and waste management within municipal buildings.

3. Community Sustainable Development Strategy

A number of communities are committed to the development of a local sustainable development strategy. There are several that are well advanced and others that are in the process of being developed. The process for the strategy development varies from community to community however most involved the local round table and significant public involvement.

4. Community Projects

Although the local Round Tables represent a community effort there are examples of specific programs which are based on multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level. In one example, local citizens, environmental groups and municipal staff are working together on a stream rehabilitation project. Another example allows local citizens groups to implement demonstration projects in waste management. There are also examples of corporate sponsorship of tree planting projects and community forum events.

5. Economic Development Strategy

An economic development strategy is becoming an important item on the municipal agenda. Many municipalities, large and small have economic development officers or departments within the municipal organization. The interest in economic development stems from the recognition that municipalities can play an active role in shaping the economic future of the community. Although the primary aim of the economic development strategy is to secure a stable economy for a community, many communities have been very specific about the kind of economic development that is desired. As such the economic development strategy/economic development officer can play a pivotal role in setting criteria for sustainable economic development.

6. Environmental Office /Environmental Coordinator

One new approach which is being tried in several large municipalities is the creation of the position of environmental coordinator and/or office for environmental policy. In some cases the office or position is part of the overall corporate administration reporting directly to the Chief Administrative Officer. In other cases the responsibility is lodged in a specific department such as engineering or public health. In all examples the role of the environmental coordinator or office is to develop or coordinate comprehensive policies regarding the implementation of sustainable development. Some have progressed

as far as determining major components such as environmental protection, education and community leadership.

7. Environmentally Sensitive Areas

The protection of environmentally sensitive lands has become a policy component of many local and regional planning exercises. Lands are designated as environmentally sensitive through the official plan process and are then subject to specific policies. These policies restrict but do not always exclude development on environmentally sensitive sites. These lands include areas such as wetlands, woodlots and ravines. Current practice has demonstrated that it is not necessary to have public ownership of these sensitive lands, in fact some of the most successful sites are those that remain in private ownership.

8. Naturalization of Parkland

Naturalization of parkland involves a shift away from highly manicured and landscaped open spaces. Most parkland is covered in grass and although this is generally pleasant it requires excessive maintenance and does not allow for local plant species to grow naturally. Naturalization allows for regeneration of indigenous plant material thereby supporting the goal of biodiversity in the urban environment. Naturalization may also involve the re-establishment or rehabilitation of woodlands and/or wetlands. The reduction in maintenance saves money, energy and eliminates the use of pesticides. An additional benefit is the introduction of a truly natural landscape that is integrated into the urban setting. Naturalization is being tested in limited areas in several municipalities across Ontario.

9. Full Cost Pricing/Resource Conservation Programs

Full cost pricing and specific conservation programs have been introduced in a number of municipalities. The examples of full cost pricing may not reflect the full cost of the service but the increases do reflect a move in that direction. This approach has been applied to waste management services by increasing tipping fees and to the provision of water by increasing water and sewage charges. Pricing policies are often accompanied by conservation programs which encompass a variety of techniques to encourage citizens to use less water or energy. The conservation programs include educational programs, advisory services and incentives to change behaviour or create less waste.

10. Waste Management

The "Blue Box" is the most commonly recognized local initiative in waste management, however many municipalities have a wide variety of waste management initiatives. They include municipal composting projects, grants to local community groups for waste

management projects, toxic waste days, household hazardous waste pick-up and increases in tipping fees at landfill sites. Many businesses and business organizations have also taken initiatives to reduce the amount of waste produced. Offices have implemented paper recycling programs and are beginning to recycle metal and glass as well. Significant measures have also taken place in the construction industry.

11. Re-Use of Buildings

Preservation of existing buildings is most often viewed in historical or cultural terms, however from the environmental perspective it also represents an opportunity to save resources. Existing structures carry significant amounts of material and energy which should be reused, if at all possible. Building preservation also serves to maintain stability in a community which ultimately contributes to the overall economic well being of a community.

12. Tree Planting and Preservation

Tree planting in parks and along streets has been a traditional activity for municipalities over the years. Recent recognition of the environmental significance of trees, particularly in respect to global warming, has brought renewed interest to tree planting programs. Government, non-profit groups and businesses have been active in community tree planting programs and in public education about trees.

As well as planting new trees, preservation of existing trees has become an issue of increasing concern, particularly to municipal governments. Many are seeking new ways to protect existing trees from destruction.

13. Transportation

Sustainable transportation initiatives include policies and programs such as marketing strategies for public transit, introduction of dedicated lanes for public transit vehicles, bicycle paths and increased parking charges. These have been tried in Ontario communities with a varying degree of success. Those communities that are most successful in achieving a modal shift away from the automobile appear to those that have a more comprehensive approach to transportation policies. A comprehensive approach implies a balance of incentives to use transit, walking or bicycles and disincentives for automobile use.

14. Urban Form/Intensification

Intensification of development in the form of redevelopment projects has taken place in a variety of locations across Ontario. Often the intensification includes a combination of both commercial and residential uses with affordable housing as a key component of the residential development. In some cases these redevelopment projects have also used existing buildings. The scale of these projects varies from new construction of an entire

neighbourhood to the use of vacant space by creating apartments above stores. While many of these projects have proven to be very successful, initial approvals have often been difficult to obtain due to public resistance to change in existing neighbourhoods and/or legislative barriers (i.e local by-laws).

15. Corporate Leadership

Businesses can have a considerable impact, not only in the reduction of waste and environmental damage but also in education. Greening of the workplace will no doubt have an effect on employees attitudes. As employees are expected to be more environmentally responsible at work this environmental ethic will spill over into other aspects of their lives. There is tremendous potential for education through the workplace. Many businesses large and small are now conducting environmental audits and are establishing new environmentally sound policies for the workplace.

16. State of the Environment Reporting

A state of the environment report is a status report on the condition of the environment in a specific community. State of the environment reports, sometimes referred to as state of the city reports, have been prepared by a number of local and regional municipalities. State of the environment reporting provides a means of developing an inventory of environmental assets and assessing the health of the environment. State of the environment reports should not be viewed a simply inventories, but as a broadly based review which reflects the social, cultural and economic dimensions of the community. It is an important first step in determining targets, particularly for remedial action. Furthermore, SOE reporting establishes a basis for future reporting and benchmarks for measuring progress. They serve as a useful tool in providing an information base for the generation of community goals and as the foundation of what could become and effective environmental monitoring system.

6. DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The task force applauds the measures that have been undertaken by municipalities throughout Ontario and encourages the continuation of these efforts, however, further actions are needed if we are to make some progress towards sustainability. These actions are a combination of measures to remove the barriers to sustainable development and suggestions for innovation in the way we plan and manage our urban environment.

The directions outlined in the following section are based on a number of underlying assumptions about what is needed to achieve sustainable development in the urban development and commerce sector. These assumptions represent a consensus of views of the task force members.

To begin, the task force believes that sustainable development in the urban development and commerce sector requires full participation. The responsibility for achieving sustainable development does not rest solely with government or on new legislation or regulation but with everyone, government, business, institutions, households and individuals. Therefore, a variety of complementary initiatives must be sought. New initiatives or changes must recognize the shared responsibility and also ensure that any proposal that may provide improvement in one aspect of sustainability does not disadvantage any other group or component within the sector.

Similarly, timing or phasing of change must be considered. In some cases it may be necessary to implement changes gradually in order to allow for structural adjustments in the economy and to avoid undue hardship. It is apparent that there will be some difficulty in the transitional stages and a strategic approach must be taken to manage the transition.

The clarification of roles and responsibilities of different levels of government is a constant topic in the urban development and commerce sector. The consensus view of the task force is that the provincial government should not be involved in the day to day land use matters of local communities. Municipal governments should be given more autonomy on local issues. At the same time the province should be providing more and better guidance on policy issues for all municipalities to follow.

Technology also plays an important role in sustainable development. Past experience has demonstrated that reliance on certain types of technology has in fact created substantial environmental problems. Consequently it has been recognized that the impacts of technology must be studied more carefully. The task force has observed that there appears to be a wide range of views of the role of technology in the future, from a distrust of technology to a reliance on the "technical fix" as a solution. The task force has identified technology as a major component in the sustainable equation. The potential for alternative technology should not be overlooked.

In summary, future directions should reflect the following:

- a balance of approaches
- shared responsibility
- a multi-sectoral approach
- new technology
- economic restructuring
- government and organizational restructuring
- education

The outline of future directions is divided into two parts; the first deals with broad policy directions and systemic change, the second addresses specific changes related to the various elements of the urban environment.

POLICY DIRECTIONS

1. Provincial Policy Framework

A comprehensive and coordinated policy framework is needed to provide guidance to municipalities. The province's role should be to set the agenda for sustainability in the province and then, set the standards for local municipalities. It is then the responsibility of the local municipality to interpret these guidelines and apply them at the local level. A policy framework will provide a means of protecting provincial interests without direct provincial intervention in local decisions.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation

The complexities of integrating environment and economy demand new measurements. On the surface, gains in environmental quality may seem quite obvious and easy to measure in technical terms, however sustainability implies a balanced community with a healthy environment and economy. Therefore attempts to measure progress must incorporate sets of indicators or conditions.

3. Alternate Technology

Solutions to todays problems require new ways of thinking and new ways of doing things. Although we cannot rely on technology to solve all of our problems, we do need to re-examine the technical practices commonly used today. We should be seeking and applying alternate technology which is more energy efficient, creates less waste and has less impact on the natural environment.

Examples of successfully applied alternate technology include district heating and cooling or use of plant material for bank stabilization and erosion control.

4. Re-organization of Government Structure

Current government and institutional structures have been identified as obstacles to achieving sustainable development. A specific criticism of government structures is that municipal boundaries do not coincide with ecosystem boundaries thereby making it extremely difficult to implement and coordinate policies.

Responding to this criticism will not be easy. First of all, ecosystem boundaries may not be easy to define and in fact overlap. Secondly, the re-definition of municipal boundaries

along natural ecosystem lines may not serve other needs of the community. Furthermore, it would be far too complicated and disruptive.

Nonetheless, until this issue is addressed we will be hampered by counterproductive systems. Three avenues exist for change in government and institutional structures. The first is a realignment of powers amongst current levels of government. The second is an examination of the role of special purpose bodies. A third option would be to make adjustments to municipal boundaries in specific locations.

5. Provincial Programs

The provincial government has a vast number of funding programs which serve the needs of communities. While they were all designed with good intentions, many programs may conflict with sustainable development goals. Even those programs that do not have an apparent bias should be reviewed to incorporate sustainability criteria.

6. Municipal Tax Structure/Municipal Revenue Base

The current municipal tax structure and revenue base has been identified as a barrier to achieving sustainable development. A more equitable system must be sought that would support the needs of both growing and declining communities. Both have difficulty in meeting the demands for infrastructure and operational costs. A new system should be based on quality not quantity. A long term initiative of the provincial government should be an examination of the municipal tax structure. This is something that should be referred to the Fair Tax Commission.

7. Municipal Planning Process

Good planning is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. The major criticism of planning in respect to sustainable development is that is does not effectively deal with environmental or social issues. While more scrutiny of environmental issues is required, referral to the Environmental Assessment Act, as now constituted, is not the answer. Environmental assessment will not achieve sustainable development since it provides evaluation on a project basis not a comprehensive approach. Improvements are needed to the municipal planning process. Municipalities should have Official Plans that are comprehensive, have certainty and are applied with consistency.

Direction for municipal planning must come from the enabling legislation, The Planning Act. The Public Inquiry into the planning process should examine the ability of the municipal planning process to integrate economic and environmental issues and address sustainable development in a comprehensive way.

8. Education

Education is often regarded as the key to changing public attitudes and ultimate behaviour patterns. While the traditional education system, i.e. schools, universities, colleges are usually the focus of this discussion, it is not specifically relevant to the urban development sector and would perhaps be more appropriate in the Round Table's strategy document. The concept of cradle to grave applies to education as well as resource management. Education is a life long process. If we are to be successful in implementing sustainable development we cannot wait until the younger generation has grown. We must educate and train the decision-makers and managers of today. The target groups in the urban development and commerce sector are those involved in municipal government, provincial agencies dealing with urban development and commerce issues and managers in the business sector.

9. Economic Instruments

Governments, both local and provincial, should examine the potential of using economic instruments to achieve environmental objectives. Economic instruments include a variety of measures such as user charges, incentives, taxes and resource pricing which reflects the full cost. Examples of economic instruments for the urban development sector could include user charges for household garbage disposal, full cost pricing for water,and incentives for developing affordable housing and urban intensification.

Economic instruments utilize market forces to lever change. These market forces will also provide new business opportunities in the commercial and manufacturing sector.

10. A Provincial Plan

While the emphasis in this report is on local communities, the importance of a regional perspective must not be forgotten. The ability of communities to thrive is often very much dependent on the regional situation. Regional patterns of urban development across Ontario have been based on locational factors that may no longer be relevant. The legacy that remains is a contrasting pattern of concentration of growth in the golden horseshoe and a large number of single industry towns in both northern and southern Ontario which are struggling to survive. It is unclear what this pattern of development means in the context of sustainable development. There is a need to examine the implications of existing growth patterns on issues such as resource use and economic stability for the province.

A provincial plan or set of regional plans could be a valuable tool to support economic initiatives and community stability.

11. Research and Development

Canada is generally behind other economically advanced nations in research and development and the environment is no exception. Efforts are needed in the areas of alternate technology, that is, more environmentally appropriate technology. Research is also needed to develop new methodologies for monitoring and evaluation. The provincial government is best positioned to facilitate research and development activities. The actual implementation of these activities may be carried out by provincial government agencies, educational institutions or the private sector. However, the province should take the initiative to stimulate new research and development projects.

ELEMENTS OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

1. Urban Intensification

There are many reasons why what has come to be called urban intensification is environmentally appropriate. Studies of cities worldwide suggest that more compact cities not only reduce average transportation distances, but significantly alter both the mix of transportation modes selected and the patterns of trips and destinations. Each one of these factors results in reductions of transportation energy. As well, urban buildings are typically more energy and materials efficient, as is urban (as opposed to suburban) infrastructure (e.g. roads, sewers, a.d. utilities). More compact cities almost automatically reduce the pressures of development on prime agricultural land and quality habitat, such as wetlands and non-urban wooded areas. Shifting transportation patterns will help to reduce impacts on air quality and can free land devoted to automobile transportation for other desirable purposes.

Urban intensification can, of course, be carried out in both relatively desirable or relatively undesirable ways. Environmental advantages will be maximized to the extent that mixed uses can be achieved in designs and configurations which result in a good mix of affordability and desirability. More individuals and families must opt more often for relatively dense mixed-use residential settings. Many factors enter into such decisions and planners and developers must be more mindful of what they are. Considerations of this sort are every bit as important in smaller urban settings as in larger ones. As well, there are a variety of steps which the provincial government can take to promote these forms of development rather than continuing urban sprawl.

2. Transportation Policies

More compact urban areas which utilize a variety of high quality non-automobile transportation options would be successful both in terms of sustainability and liveability. There are a variety of policy options which can de adopted to promote alternative transportation modes. It should also be recognized that far and away the most cost-efficient and environmentally friendly transportation forms are walking and cycling. Every possible amenity should be provided to stimulate the use of these options and to discourage automobile use. For example, cycling routes should be established and employers, including governments, should offer financial incentives to employees who travel on business by means other than automobiles. A variety of other policies should also be put in place including higher license fees for, or taxes on, larger cars, dedicated highway and road lanes for buses and car pools.

3. Preservation of Agricultural Land

Perhaps as important as the protection of environmentally sensitive areas is the preservation of prime agricultural land adjacent to or even within urban areas. Unfortunately, because of their financing difficulties municipalities will almost always opt for the higher value land use associated with the urban development of agricultural land. For this reason, the province should take a leading role in ensuring the preservation of prime agricultural land and protecting the continued viability of farming.

4. Waste Management

The current system for dealing with waste management issues does not achieve the optimal results. The best solution cannot always be found within municipal boundaries. Therefore the decision must be taken at a broader level. New decision-making processes must be sought for the selection of landfill sites. There is also a need to explore other options for waste disposal. All options, including incineration should be considered and evaluated. Waste reduction at source should also become a priority with the focus on packaging.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are grouped into two broad categories: the institutional/systemic changes that would support and encourage a continued and ongoing movement toward sustainability and some recommendations related to urban form and economic practice.

Institutional/Systemic Recommendations

1. The Government of Ontario should prepare a provincial policy framework for sustainable development to provide guidance to municipalities. The provinces's role should be to set the agenda for sustainability in the province and to set broad standards for local municipalities. It is then the responsibility of the local municipality to interpret these guidelines and apply them at the local level. A policy framework will provide an important means of protecting provincial interests without direct provincial intervention in local decisions.

2. The Government of Ontario should review all conditional funding programs related to urban development to ensure that contradictions to sustainable practices are removed and that the programs in fact, encourage sustainable practices. Revised criteria for approval should be established.

3. In particular the Public Inquiry regarding the Planning Act should consider whether municipalities have powers adequate to the tasks associated with achieving environmental protection and sustainable development at the municipal level. The inquiry should examine whether municipalities have the ability to respond appropriately to change.

4. The Fair Tax Commission should recognize that non-sustainable decisions are being made as a result of too great a reliance of municipal governments on property taxes and development charges and address this issue.

5. The task force has found that there is a widely held view that there is unnecessary intrusion by the province in local planning decisions. The Government of Ontario should review the roles and responsibilities of local and provincial agencies and authorities with an eye to maximizing accountability to the electorate and avoiding duplication of responsibility both between and within levels of government.

6. Municipal governments should provide leadership-by-example regarding sustainable development to their local communities. They should review all local policies for consistency with sustainability objectives. This may include policies and programs such as purchasing policies, energy efficiency measures in municipal buildings, fleet management, park and public lands maintenance, and waste management within municipal buildings. It can include as well initiatives which promote cycling and public transit (including the use of these options by municipal employees), which undertake to "green" municipal official plans, which encourage sustainability education in local schools, and which promote modified behaviour regarding waste, energy efficiency and land management in local households, businesses and public institutions.

7. The Round Table model provides a new means for achieving multi-stakeholder involvement and for providing informed input to decision-making processes. Support and encouragement should be provided for the establishment of local round tables. This may be an appropriate role to be assumed by an existing provincial organization or the Government of Ontario.

9. The Government of Ontario and local governments should be encouraged to begin state of the environment reports. To accomplish this the provincial ministries should take the lead in research in this field and provide advice to local governments.

10. The Government of Ontario should take a leadership role in research to develop indicators of sustainability. This may be accomplished by specific provincial ministries or agencies or in partnership with universities or other research institutions in the province.

11. The Government of Ontario should take the lead role in providing support and encouragement for alternate technology in the area of municipal infrastructure. This support should take the form of research, information sharing, advice and funding.

12. Training and development opportunities for people working in the urban development and commerce sector should be created. Professional organizations and/or training and educational organizations could take the lead in this initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR URBAN FORM AND ECONOMIC PRACTICE

1. Both the Government of Ontario and local governments should encourage the sensitive introduction of urban intensification and mixed-use planning. There must be a broad recognition that urban sprawl, in large cities and small, not only imposes unacceptable environmental impacts, but is ultimately unsustainable.

2. The developments which will help to make our cities more compact should be carefully designed, mindful of the environmental impacts of all aspects of construction, and compatible with existing neighbourhoods.

3. In particular, regarding environmentally sensitive construction practices: heritage buildings should be preserved, the materials and embedded energy in existing buildings should be incorporated into new structures, demolition materials and construction wastes should be recycled, and construction materials should be selected on environmental as well as economic grounds. All new buildings should be as energy efficient as possible. Finally here, developers should be responsible for building site run-off during construction.

4. Municipalities and the Government of Ontario should cooperatively undertake a systematic review of contaminated urban lands (former industrial and transportation sites). An

investment should be made in developing technologies to deal with this problem. Policies should be developed to support on-site clean-up rather than the current dig and haul approach.

5. The Government of Ontario and municipalities should do more to increase the proportion of Ontarions who walk, cycle, car poll, or take public transit to work and to other destinations. Cycle transportation should be established in urban areas.

6. As well, the Government of Ontario and municipalities should explore creative ways to discourage single-passenger car use in some contexts, particularly for daily travel into and within the urban cores of large cities. Employers (including public sector employers) might be encouraged to institute charges for parking, to provide transit passes, or to pay mileage for business travel by cycle or transit. If there are costs for such encouragement to government they can be covered from reduced highway construction budgets which are appropriate in any case.

7. The Government of Ontario should support the protection of prime agricultural or environmentally sensitive lands at the urban fringe.

8. The designation of environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) should be undertaken by municipalities, regional governments, and/or counties. Development within ESAs should be either prohibited or stringently controlled. The Planning Act should be revised to explicitly encourage such undertakings.

9. Municipalities should explore the possibility of "naturalizing" some of their park land and open space.

10. Means should be found to achieve the provincial goal of a 50% reduction of municipal solid waste by the year 2000. To achieve this goal composting must be widely accepted, more packaging materials must be recyclable and recycled, and some forms of waste must be reduced or eliminated. The Government of Ontario, in cooperation with businesses and consumers, should review the options for product and packaging re-design. A non-recyclability tax as noted above, might be considered.

11. Municipalities should institute per unit charges for residential collection of municipal solid waste.

12. Water should be metered in those urban locations where this is not presently done. Conservation pricing of water and/or sewage should be undertaken.

13. Economic diversification of single-industry or dominant-industry municipalities should be urgently undertaken whenever possible.

14. A variety of steps should be taken to promote affordable housing; such programs should also promote intensification. At present, the Municipal Non-Profit Housing Program requires municipalities to conduct a "best buy" analysis for the purchase of land for non-profit housing. Seeking the cheapest land carries a bias against infilling. Additional costs might be offset by combining residential and commercial development in some instances.